

LIVING IN TENSION: SECULARISM AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE MILITARY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

LIVING IN TENSION: SECULARISM AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE MILITARY

by

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ABSTRACT

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The United States of America was founded upon principles derived from the Christian religion and holy writings, principally; the Holy Bible. The United States operates on or is imbued with what many describe as a Judeo-Christian ethic. Through the years, that Judeo-Christian foundation has been attacked and eroded by a conscious effort on the part of some within our population to *secularize* the country, moving it from a religious identity and influence to one that is increasingly non-religious, and some would argue is growing toward anti-religious. This secularization process is evidenced by such things as the banning of public prayers in schools, the removal of the Ten Commandments and other religious symbols (mostly Christian) from public view, and open hostility toward Christianity in the media and other public forums. This secularization process taking place in America has an increasing impact on the military with potential negative outcomes. In answer to the pressure of increased secularization, the military must protect the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion for all service members.

LIVING IN TENSION: SECULARISM AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE MILITARY

In the year A.D. 320, in a vain effort to impede the growth of the Christian Church, the Roman Emperor Valerius Licinius decreed that all civil servants and members of the military must offer sacrifices before the local gods. One cold, winter morning, the order was read to the Twelfth Legion, stationed at Sabaste in Armenia, and the soldiers were called upon to demonstrate their loyalty to Caesar through the prescribed offering. But there were forty Christians in the ranks of the legion, who informed their captain that they could not sacrifice on a pagan altar for they were devoted to love only God. Subsequent attempts to dissuade them failed. Thus, the order was given to strip the soldiers and march then into the middle of a frozen lake. There, exposed to the elements, they would freeze to death, unless they would renounce their Christian faith and offer the prescribed sacrifice to the emperor. Throughout the night, one by one, the men all died, 40 brave soldiers for Christ.¹

Why were these brave soldiers of the Twelfth Legion forced to choose between their faithful devotion to God and their allegiance to the Emperor? Was their religious faith interfering with their military obligations? Were they guilty of cowardice in battle or disloyalty to the Emperor because of their commitment to their faith? The history of this incident records that these were brave men who were held in high regard by their officers and fellow soldiers. Yet they faced a hostile environment that forced them to make a choice between their Christian faith and their loyalty to the Emperor. Their decision to remain loyal to God resulted in their deaths.

For most people, it is inconceivable that such a hostile environment toward Christians or any other religious group could ever exist within the United States Military.

But for others, such an environment is already taking shape, perhaps not one leading to choices that include life or death, but clearly one that can include voluntary or involuntary separation from military service because of a higher commitment to one's religious beliefs and to God. This tension between faith and military service can be seen most recently in the issues of offering public prayers in Jesus' name and in the changing of policy to allow openly homosexual persons to serve in the military.

This project seeks to analyze the growing tension that is created by the move to increased secularization of the military and provide recommendations as to the proper role and practice of religious faith within the military profession. Because the greatest level of tension today is seen between secularists and the Christian faith, the manuscript will address these two areas specifically, though the analysis will be applicable to other faith groups that are present in the military. The analysis will explore the history and meaning of the free exercise of religion, the historical benefits of religious faith on society and individuals, the rise of *radical secularism*,² and the proper response of people of faith and the military leadership to this tension. For ease of discussion, any reference to the Army or to Soldiers should be understood as applying to all branches of the military and all military members.

The Relationship of the Military and Religion

The United States Military is not now, nor has it ever been, a religious organization. It is instead a secular institution serving a secular state. There is no religious test applied to those who enlist and serve in the ranks of the Armed Forces. There is no requirement of religious practice or devotion for a person to be promoted to higher levels of responsibility and leadership within the military structure. All Soldiers have equal opportunity to serve and advance in rank. These principles are in line with

Article 6 of the United States Constitution which states, “No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.”³

Though the words of Article 6 apply specifically to those in public office, it applies in principle to those who serve in the military, which is in itself a position of public trust. The fact that the military is not a religious organization does not mean that the military is devoid of religious expression or is in any way anti-religious, nor does it need to be this way. Three facts can help us understand the relationship between the military organization and religion.

First, the military supports and encourages the “free exercise of religion” by all military members as guaranteed in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, which states in part, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”⁴ Every commander is charged with the responsibility to ensure this freedom of religion for their Soldiers.⁵ Chaplains are employed within the military to facilitate the free exercise requirement.

Second, the military recognizes the presence of a spiritual dimension in each person’s life.⁶ This recognition is supported in both doctrinal publications⁷ and in programs which are designed to address and enhance an individual’s spiritual dimension. One such program is the recently developed *Soldier Comprehensive Fitness* program which addresses the spiritual dimension along with the other four dimensions of life; intellectual, physical, emotional and social.

Third, though the Army is not a religious organization, a large majority of its members are religious people (i.e. claim a religious preference as well as have religious affiliations and beliefs)⁸ who profess and practice their religious faith along with their

military service. These two aspects of life, military service and religious devotion, are not and should not be incompatible. Soldiers should, in fact, find and be permitted to enjoy a meaningful level of integration.

The challenge to the integrated practice of faith and military service is the determined effort on the part of some individuals and groups within the United States to prevent any expression of religion in the public arena, both in American society in general and in the United States Military, specifically. This push to greater secularization is evidenced by the efforts to remove prayers from public ceremonies, eliminate chaplains from the military, remove public displays of religious expression and symbols, and discontinue the recognition of a spiritual dimension of life.

The problem is, this growing effort to radical secularization of the military has the potential to not only restrict the free exercise of religion for Soldiers, but also to undermine the core values that are foundational to military service and that are inculcated within each person who volunteers and serves in the military.

Definition of Concepts and Terms

To fully comprehend the challenges to the practice of religious faith by members of the military, one must understand the ideas and the worldview⁹ of those who stand in opposition to the value of religion in the public square. These ideas are captured in the word *secular* and its derivatives, *secularism* and *secularization*. In seeking to understand the tension that exists between secularism and Christianity (or most any other religion) in society or the military, it is important to understand the meaning and relationship that exists between this trilogy of terms which convey a progression of thought that moves from a condition, to a philosophy, to an activity with a clear objective.

The first word, *secular*, has been in use for several hundred years and carries a meaning which implies it is the opposite of religious. Webster's Dictionary defines *secular* as, "of or relating to the worldly or temporal; not overtly or specifically religious." This word is a very innocuous word that reflects a condition or a position of one thing in relation to another. In relation to religious things, secular identifies certain things as being not related to or influenced by that which is religious. The use of the word *secular* can be applied to persons, places, organizations, or things. In itself, the word secular poses no threat to religious freedom.

The implication of an individual, organization, or culture being secular leads to the second term in the trilogy, *secularism*. This word was first used in 1850, well after the founding fathers wrote the Bill of Rights. G.J. Holyoake¹⁰ coined the term to denote "a system which seeks to interpret and order life on principles taken solely from this world, without recourse to belief in God and a future life."¹¹ It is a philosophy that grew out of the Age of Enlightenment in which only that which could be proven and verified by use of the empirical, scientific method was held as objective fact and all else (i.e. religious teaching) was considered subjective¹² and thereby of less value and subject to personal preference and choice. As such, the philosophy carries a negative attitude toward Christianity in particular and toward all religion in general. In the political-military context, secularism is the philosophy that the government and governmental institutions should exist separately from religion, religious influence, and/or religious beliefs, i.e. the two should be absolutely separate for they conduct separate functions.

The implementation of the philosophy of secularism leads to the final term in the progression, *secularization*, which is "the transformation of a society from close

identification with religious values and institutions toward non-religious or irreligious values and secular institutions.” This transformation of a society or an organization (or even of an individual), from the religious to the secular is a process¹³ that can occur in one of two ways. First, it can occur in an unintentional manner, whereby, given enough time and lack of attention to a given set of religious beliefs and practices, the society, organization or individual begins to drift from their religious foundation and replaces the religious values with other non-religious values. This type of transformation is characterized in what is called *Secularization thesis*, the belief that as societies "progress, particularly through modernization and rationalization, religion loses its authority in all aspects of social life and governance.”¹⁴

The second way in which a society, organization or individual can be secularized is in a more aggressive approach taken by those who have adopted the philosophy or worldview of secularism and thereby believe that all influence of religion within the society must be restricted or eliminated for the good of the whole. This is the step in the progression of terms where the philosophy of secularism takes up energy in the effort to create the condition of being secular. As one definition pointedly states, secularization means “to separate something from religious or spiritual connection and make it worldly or unspiritual.” This definition implies an intentional effort to move something from one condition to another, as from being religious to being secular. It is this aggressive activity of radical secularization that produces the tension that exists between the secularists and the Christian community both within society at large and within the military.

The ideology represented by the secular progression is in sharp contrast to that which is Christian or religious, and so the two are in tension with one another. They are often described as being two opposing worldviews that are in a head-on clash.¹⁵ As such, the strict secularist, or the one pushing for increased secularization of society and the military, would advocate for a very high and unscalable wall of separation to exist between these two realms. They would, in fact, advocate that the public institutions and practices of society at large, and specifically in the political and military arenas, should be devoid of and protected from any religious expression and influence, especially on the part of leaders in positions of authority and in regard to public, official, and mandatory functions within the organization.

One that holds this view of secularization would not negate or deny the practice of religious observance in one's private life, or within a larger corporate religious body, as in a church, but they would not desire or allow for the religious practice or influence to spill over from one's private life, or from the walls of the church building, to activity or engagement in one's public life. This idea advocates the teaching that those who adhere to or follow a given set of religious beliefs should compartmentalize their practice of faith from their everyday engagement in their workplace or in the community. The two, they believe, should never mix. Here in lies the tension. For many who live their lives in adherence to a given set of religious beliefs, be they Christian, Muslim, or otherwise, the idea of compartmentalizing or partitioning their faith from their work and daily living would be contrary to the very beliefs they espouse to follow.

Highlighting the tension that exists, there are some very devout secularists that have taken upon themselves to push the secularization agenda and advocate for the

non-influence of religion on public life. Francis Schaeffer, in his book, “A Christian Manifesto”, quotes William Bentley Ball¹⁶ as saying,

I propose that secularism militates against religious liberty, and indeed against personal freedoms generally for two reasons: first, the familiar fact that secularism does not recognize the existence of the “higher law” (or God’s law); second, because that being so, secularism tends toward decisions based on the pragmatic public policy of the moment and inevitably tends to resist the submitting of those policies to the “higher” criteria of the constitution...¹⁷

This “higher criteria of the constitution” refers to the inalienable rights which are granted to mankind by the supreme law giver, namely God (the God as understood in the Christian scriptures). This type of aggressive secularization has the potential to dampen the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion.

Understanding the First Amendment

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”¹⁸ In writing this, the first of ten amendments to the Bill of Rights, the founding fathers sought to establish protection for what they believed to be several basic human rights critical to establishing and maintaining a democracy. The first of these basic human rights is referred to as *freedom of religion*.

This religious freedom, understood as the right of an individual to practice any or no religion without fear of coercion, discrimination, or injury, is one of the great hallmarks of American society and government. One of the major reasons the early pilgrims came to America from Europe was to escape religious persecution that existed in those nations where the ruling government established and supported a national

religion. Those who were not aligned with that established state religious group were forced to flee or endure coercion, discrimination, imprisonment, and, sometimes, death.

The founding fathers of the United States were well aware of the importance of establishing and protecting religious freedom within the new nation. In order to guarantee this protection, the first amendment to the United States Constitution was drafted, debated and written into law with the desired intention of protecting the freedom of citizens to practice the religion of their choice, or no religion at all, without government interference. However, what was intended to be a means to restrict government's role in affecting religion has become, for some, a means to restrict the practice of religion. Thus the historical understanding of this first amendment principle has come to be interpreted by some as not "freedom of religion" but "freedom from religion." These two expressions are miles apart in understanding and practice.

Historically, the first injunction of the amendment has been understood to contain two clauses. The first is the "establishment" clause - "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." The second is the "free exercise" clause - "or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The intent of the authors in writing the amendment in this way was two-fold.

First, as specified in the first clause of the amendment, the writers intended that the Congress of the United States should never be involved in establishing an official "state religion" or "preferred denomination" in which one religious group was recognized for preferential treatment or monetary benefit from the state over any other religious group. In effect, there should be no "Church of the United States"¹⁹ as there was the well known "Church of England." The founding fathers understood the dangers of this

practice and set the amendment in place to prevent the occurrence and protect the people from an overreaching legislative body.

Second, as specified in the second clause of the amendment, the writers intended that the Congress should not get involved in writing legislation that would impede or interfere with the freedom of individuals or groups to practice their religious faith in accordance with the tenets of that faith or the dictates of their conscience. “This understanding is the very opposite of what is being made of it today.”²⁰ This restriction was intended to keep the government from meddling in the affairs of religion, it was not intended to restrict or eliminate the influence of religion on the government or upon society.

This understanding of the First Amendment, as restricting government and not religion, was held until 1947 when Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black took a phrase from a letter written by Thomas Jefferson and wrote that a “high and impregnable wall of separation”²¹ existed between the establishment clause and the free exercise clause and, thereby, between the church and the state. Radical secularists, those who oppose any expression or influence of religion in the government or the public arena, have championed this interpretation of the First Amendment and used it to advance their cause. However, when viewed in the historical context of Jefferson’s letter, this “wall of separation” as defined by some today could not have been the intent of the founding fathers.

One needs only consider such things as the laws established for prayer to be offered in the daily opening of Congress, the long standing tradition for prayers offered at the inauguration of our President, the established position of chaplains both in

Congress and in the military, and the number of national buildings and monuments that are marked by religious symbols, pictures, and Biblical references. Clearly, the founding fathers never intended that religion, and more specifically, the Christian religion, should have no expression or influence within the public arena.

The intent of the first amendment was to restrain Congress from infringing upon the practice of religion, not to prohibit religion from providing influence upon society as a whole, or in the government, or in the military. John Adams, second president of the United States, confirmed this understanding when he wrote, “Our Constitution was designed for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.”²²

The Influence of Religion in the History of the United States

The influence of the Christian religion on the founding and growth of the United States is both significant and undeniable. The evidence of this influence is embedded in the historical documents of our country and the personal letters of most of the 250 founding fathers.²³ It is written in the stone of our most historical and treasured buildings and monuments and embossed in our currency. Margret Thatcher, former Prime Minister of England, recognized the importance of religion in the founding of America when she said, “Americans have held fast to their belief in freedom for all men – a belief that springs from their spiritual heritage.”²⁴

History reveals that through the Christian religion, orphanages and charities were established to care for the homeless and the poor; hospitals were built to care for the sick; and schools and universities were founded to educate young men and women.²⁵ Clearly, there has also been much abuse and misuse of the Christian religion through the centuries, but the true value and spirit of Christianity has been predominantly

positive and has influenced the values and work ethic of not only the western world and the United States, but also of the United States Military.

General George Washington confirmed his belief in the critical importance of religion and its influence in American society when he said, "Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."²⁶

In an 1892 court decision, the United States Supreme Court validated the significant importance of the Christian religion to the fabric and foundation of American society highlighting the fact

...that from the commission given by Ferdinand and Isabella to Columbus down through all the charters to the colonies, as well as in the Declaration of Independence and in the constitutions of all the States, there is to be found a "profound reverence for religion and an assumption that its influence in all human affairs is essential to the well-being of the United States."²⁷

These many documented contributions and influences that the Christian religion brought to American society and to the establishment of the United States government has, through the years, eroded and been expunged from the history books.²⁸ This erosion is driven primarily by the secularist movement that seeks to undermine and minimize the importance of Christianity in the founding and history of America.

Recognition of the Spiritual Dimension in the Army

Throughout the history of mankind, "most cultures have assumed that a human being comprises both physical and spiritual elements – body and soul."²⁹ Early in the history of America, this belief found root in the fabric of the United States Army where

an acknowledgement of the spiritual dimension of life and the practice and integration of religious faith into military service was believed to be of vital importance.

In 1775, the Continental Congress gave birth to the military chaplaincy in the United States when it instituted a paid chaplaincy for the Army. George Washington understood the importance of nurturing the religious faith of his Soldiers when he commissioned the first chaplain into the Army saying, “The blessing and protection of heaven are at all times necessary, but especially so in times of public distress and danger.” Since that time, chaplains have served alongside Soldiers for the precise purpose to provide and perform religious services and to ensure the free exercise of religion for all service members.³⁰

This official understanding and acknowledgement by the Army of the spiritual dimension of life is found in many references and documents. During World War II, the slogan, “There are no atheists in foxholes,”³¹ became a popular and familiar expression to convey the idea that in times of extreme stress and fear, as in combat, people become open to their spiritual side and seek to establish connection with God or some higher power. From the same period, George C. Marshall is often quoted as emphasizing the importance of a person’s spiritual dimension when he said, “The soldier’s heart, the soldier’s spirit, the soldier’s soul, are everything. Unless the soldier’s soul sustains him he cannot be relied on and will fail himself and his commander and his country in the end.”³²

In the book, *Forging the Warrior’s Character: Moral Precepts from the Cadet Prayer*, project director and author, Don Snider, highlights the fact that in 2002, West

Point “specified a new domain- the spiritual- as one of the three main areas in which the Academy facilitates the formation of character in future Army Officers.”³³

In 2006, the Army established the Soldier Comprehensive Fitness program that espouses the spiritual dimension as one of the five dimensions of a person’s life that must be considered when seeking to build personal well being and resilience for combat and for life. This program defines the spiritual domain as, “a set of beliefs, principles or values that sustain a person beyond family, institutional, and societal sources of strength.”³⁴ In this definition of spiritual, it is understood that a person may be spiritual without being necessarily religious.

Recognizing the spiritual dimension, the Army has tasked commanders and chaplains with the development of programs and opportunities for Soldiers to enhance their spiritual fitness which is defined as,

The development of the personal qualities needed to sustain a person in times of stress, hardship, and tragedy. These qualities come from religious, philosophical, or human values and form the basis for character, disposition, decision making, and integrity.³⁵

The Air Force also acknowledges the spiritual domain as an integral part of life that needs to be developed and strengthened for a person to be resilient. Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2618 emphasizes *spiritual readiness* for all Airmen, defining it as “the development of those personal qualities needed to help a person through times of stress, hardship, and tragedy.”

This recognition of the importance of the spiritual dimension of life is validated in the results of a study by Dr. Harold Koenig on the outcomes of spiritual fitness.

- Less depression, faster recovery from depression (204 of 324 studies)

- Greater well-being, happiness, meaning, purpose and hope (278 of 359 studies)
- Less alcohol/drug use (276 of 374 studies)
- Less delinquency and crime (81 of 102 studies)
- Greater marital stability/less divorce/less spouse abuse (68 of 79 studies)
- Greater social support (57 of 68 studies)³⁶

This study clearly shows the value of taking time to develop the spiritual dimension of life in individuals. To lose the inclusion of the spiritual dimension would limit the military's effort to build resilience in an individual and would be an assault upon the moral foundation of our Army.

The Push for Secularization

Several organizations within the United States lead the effort to champion the strict separation of church and state. These include the Freedom from Religion Foundation,³⁷ Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers,³⁸ Military Religious Freedom Foundation,³⁹ and Americans United for the Separation of Church.⁴⁰

The current push to greater secularization of the military is led by Michael L. "Mikey" Weinstein, founder of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF). In 2005, Mr. Weinstein started the organization as a nonprofit charitable foundation for the expressed purpose to directly battle the "far-right militant radical evangelical religious fundamentalists."⁴¹

His impetus to begin this organization grew from his own experience of religious intolerance encountered while a cadet at the Air Force Academy in the mid 1970s and a similar episode experienced by his son while also a cadet at the Air Force Academy in

2004. Mr. Weinstein, being Jewish, says that as a student at the Academy, he was harassed by the over-zealous evangelical members of the staff and students at the academy and received two beatings by upper-classmen in retaliation for his reporting anti-Semitic remarks to his chain of command. 30 years later, his son was treated in a similar fashion. From this experience, Mr. Weinstein perceived that the legal requirement for the separation of church and state within the military was non-functioning and he founded this organization as a watchdog on the military to ensure legal requirements for the separation of church and state were enforced.⁴²

The most recently example of MRFF activism was in 2010 when Mr. Weinstein and the MRFF threatened to sue the United States Army and the Department of Defense if they did not drop the emphasis on the *spiritual dimension* from the Global Assessment Tool (GAT),⁴³ part of the Soldier Comprehensive Program. The MRFF objected to the use of the spiritual dimension on the grounds that it implied that one must be religious in order to be resilient and be fit for service in the Army. This implication was perceived as an offense to those who hold the view of no religion and was considered, by MRFF, to be a violation of the separation of church and state.

Mr. Weinstein's motto for the MRFF makes his understanding of the separation of personal religion and military service very clear –

When one proudly dons a US military uniform, there is only one religious symbol; the American flag. There is only one religious scripture; the American constitution. Finally, there is only one religious faith; American Patriotism.⁴⁴

At face value, the MRFF motto implies that when one enters the military, he or she must lay aside their personal religious beliefs and practices and adopt the *new religion* of American Patriotism. But, those who choose to worship the nation they serve

above all other moral and/or spiritual principles risk becoming a blind follower to the national will apart from any religious or higher morality. This is akin to the followers of Hitler in Nazi Germany who laid aside their religious convictions and morality to follow the “higher calling” of the Fatherland.

This system of thought is what led to the deaths of the 40 soldiers of the Twelfth Legion when the choice was laid before them to renounce their Christian religion in favor of the new religion of the Emperor, or in the case of Mr. Weinstein, the new religion of American Patriotism. This belief that a person must choose one or the other presents a false dichotomy. Obedience to one’s religion and obedience to one’s military service are not exclusive practices. Doing one does not exclude one’s ability to do the other and to do it well. As has been shown throughout history, the mindful practice of one’s religious faith can, and normally does, enhance one’s service in the Armed Forces.

Finding the Balance

Understanding the tension that exists between the goals of the secularists and the Christian’s desire to integrate faith in all aspects of life, the challenge is to find the balance between the two. Where is the proper line between religious freedom of expression for the Christian and religious coercion, as perceived by the secularist?

Jimmy Browning, USAF Chaplain, has correctly analyzed the tension concluding that the heart of the issue is not about coercion, but offense. He states that, “for many, being offended by the public expression of religion” (i.e. having to sit through a public prayer by a chaplain during an official ceremony), “becomes the standard to determine coercion.”⁴⁵ Clearly, there is a difference between the two positions of one being offended by observing a religious activity and one being coerced into participation or

acceptance of a religious belief or practice. Army leadership must respond to both issues as they arise, but, in the ongoing effort to respond to the concerns of the secularist, the Army must be careful not to deny the rights of freedom of religion to the Christian or any other faith group, which represent the majority of Soldiers.

In October 2010, the Army Chief of Chaplains briefed the current demographics of the Army showing that an overwhelming majority of Soldiers claim some form of religious affiliation. Specifically, the data revealed that 70% of Soldiers are of the Christian faith (including Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant); .18% of Soldiers are of other religious faith groups; .04% of Soldiers are Atheist; and 27% of Soldiers list no preference or their preference is unknown. With such a high percentage of Soldiers claiming a religious preference, it is unreasonable that the Army would deny the majority the freedom of religious expression at the expense of the few who may be offended by observing religious expression. This response would be out of balance, elevating the rights of the minority over the rights of the majority.

Just as those who find no value in religion need to exercise tolerance of religious expression by the majority, those who value religious expression must remember that they serve in a pluralistic environment composed of a variety of people from many backgrounds and with many religious and non-religious views. Therefore, any expression of religion (be it in a public, official ceremony or a statement of personal belief) must be shared without any intent of coercion. This is especially true for leaders. Army Regulation 600-23, Army Health Promotion, makes this very clear.

In providing for self-development activities, commanders and other leaders must ensure they do not favor one form of religion over another. The practice of religion, to the extent that it relates to spiritual fitness, must be left to the sole discretion of the Soldier, family member, or Army

civilian. They must be free to worship or not worship as they choose without fear of being disciplined or stigmatized for their choice.⁴⁶

The balance then is found by allowing elements of religious expression by all individuals, religious and non-religious (thus supporting freedom of religion), while also guarding against any form of coercion or inappropriate influence. In addition, individuals, both religious and non-religious, must learn to tolerate the expressions of the other without being offended.

Conclusion

In view of the aggressive actions by secularists to silence religious expression, the Army leadership must defend the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion for all Soldiers. To ensure this level of religious freedom, the Army should take the following actions to ensure balance is maintained and all parties are protected.

- The Army must defend the position of the chaplain as the one who monitors and facilitates the free exercise of religion for all Soldiers.
- The Army must continue to emphasize the spiritual dimension of life as one of the keys for resiliency and health, allowing those who hold opposing views to opt out as desired.
- The Army must educate leaders at all levels on the proper method to express their faith without showing favoritism or hinting at coercion.
- The Army must defend the free exercise of religion for all Soldiers, both religious and non-religious, as guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution.

The tension between the secular and the religious will always exist and may grow more intense as American society continues to succumb to the forces of secularization. In the midst of this tension, commanders at all levels are charged with the responsibility

to ensure that the Constitutional right to the free exercise of religion is not diminished, on the one hand, and is not coercive, on the other hand. This responsibility requires diligence on the part of all leaders to monitor the issue and take action when either side of the problem is under attack.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Weinstein and his son had the experience of intolerance while students at the Air Force Academy. No one should ever be subjected to this or any kind of religious harassment, intolerance, or coercion while serving in the U.S. Military where freedom of religion is and should remain a protected value. The freedom to practice one's religious faith and serve in the military is not incompatible.

Endnotes

¹ F.L. Cross, and E.A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2d Edition (New York, NY; Oxford University Press, 1982), 1254.

² The term *radical secularism* and *radical secularization* are the terms I have chosen to describe those who exert extreme effort to stifle religious expression in the public square.

³ U.S. Constitution, art.6.

⁴ U.S. Constitution, First Amendment.

⁵ Department of Defense (DOD) Directive 1304.19 section 4.1, 2007, states, "It is the commanders' responsibility to provide for the free exercise of religion in the context of military service as guaranteed by the Constitution."

⁶ 2010 Army Posture Statement, Addendum G, Soldier Comprehensive Fitness, https://secureweb2.hqda.pentagon.mil/VDAS_ArmyPostureStatement/2010/addenda/Addendum_G-Comp.%20Soldier%20Fitness.asp (accessed March 5, 2011).

⁷ Explanation of the spiritual component in Soldier and family well being is detailed in AR 600-20, Army Command Policy, AR 600-63, Army Health Promotion, and AR 165-1, Army Chaplain Corps Activities.

⁸ Chaplain (MG) Douglas Carver, U.S. Army Chief of Chaplains, briefing delivered to the US Army Pre-Command Course, Fort Leavenworth, KS, October 2010.

⁹ Worldview is defined as that set of principles and beliefs by which an individual or group interprets and understands the world around them and thereby conforms their behavior and activity around that view.

¹⁰ George Jacob Holyoake was mainly self-educated and a vigorous campaigner for secularism and freethought during the 19th century. He wrote 160 books and pamphlets and edited several magazines, including *The Movement* and *The Reasoner*. He was a professed atheist and later an agnostic (once that term had become available). Holyoake was the last person in England to be imprisoned on a charge of atheism.

¹¹ F.L. Cross, and E.A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2d Edition (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1982), 1255.

¹² Nancy Pearcey, *Saving Leonardo: A Call to Resist the Secular Assault on Mind, Morals, & Meaning*, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010) 13

¹³ Os Guinness, "A Time to Stand: The Christian Faith and the Conflict of Civilizations," *Journal of Faith and War*, <http://faithandwar.org/index.php?view=article&catid=42%3Agod-and-human-nature&id=8>, (accessed on 15 Feb 2011).

¹⁴ Sam Hey, "Ministry Confronts Secularisation," <http://www.pastornet.net.au/renewal/journal18/18g%20Hey.htm> (accessed March 5, 2011)

¹⁵ *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview, Volume Four, A Christian View of the Church* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1982) 437-438.

¹⁶ William Bentley Ball was a partner of the law firm of Ball and Skelly in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He has been lead counsel in litigation in twenty states and has appeared before the Supreme Court in parental rights cases. He was a constitutional lawyer nationally known for his defense of religious doctrine and practice against secular encroachment. He died in January 10, 1999.

¹⁷ *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian Worldview, Volume Five, A Christian View of the West* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1982) 465.

¹⁸ U.S. Constitution, First Amendment.

¹⁹ *Francis A. Schaeffer, Volume Five*, 433.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ In the early 1800's, the leaders of the Danbury Baptist Association wrote a letter to President Thomas Jefferson expressing their concern that the government would intrude on their freedom of religion. In a reply letter, Jefferson assured them that the government would leave them alone and that there was "a wall of separation between the government and the church." This reference to the wall of separation was all but ignored until redefined by Justice Hugo Black in 1947 for the case of *Everson vs Board of Education*.

²² William J. Federer, *America's God and Country: Encyclopedia of Quotations* (St Louis, MO: Amerisearch, 2000) 10-11.

- ²³ David Barton, *The American Heritage Series*, DVD Set (Wallbuilders, 2007)
- ²⁴ Margret Thatcher, "God and Man: A Perspective on Christianity in the 20th Century," delivered in November 1994 at Hillsdale College, Michigan, <http://fatihandwar.org/index.php?view=article&catid=42%3Agod-and-human-nature&id=1>(accessed on 15 Feb 2011)
- ²⁵ Pearcey, *Saving Leonardo*, 13.
- ²⁶ Federer, *America's God and Country*, 661. Quotation by George Washington as stated in his farewell address, September 19, 1796
- ²⁷ Thomas James Norton, *The Constitution of the United States: Its Sources and its Applications* (Cleveland & New York: The World Publishing Company, eighth printing, 1943) 6.
- ²⁸ Barton, *The American Heritage Series*, Disk 1.
- ²⁹ Pearcey, *Saving Leonardo*, 49.
- ³⁰ U.S. Code, Title 10.
- ³¹ There is no indication of where or when this saying became popular. However, the saying is clearly not a universal statement of fact as there are atheists who have been through combat without being converted to a religion.
- ³² George C. Marshall, quoted in Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-63-12, *Spiritual Fitness: Fit to Win* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, September 1987) 1.
- ³³ Don M. Snider, Project Dir, *Forging the Warrior's Character: Moral Precepts from the Cadet Prayer* (Sisters OR: Jerico, 2007), 10.
- ³⁴ Comprehensive Soldier Fitness, <http://www.army.mil/csf/whatiscsf.html> (accessed 15 Feb 2011)
- ³⁵ U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Health Promotion*, Army Regulation 600-63 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, September 7, 2010), 37.
- ³⁶ Harold Koenig, Duke University Medical Center, 2009.
- ³⁷ Freedom from Religion Foundation, <http://www.ffrf.org/>
- ³⁸ Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, <http://www.militaryatheists.org/>
- ³⁹ Military Religious Freedom Foundation, <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/>
- ⁴⁰ Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, <http://www.au.org/>
- ⁴¹ Military Religious Freedom Foundation Home Page, <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/about/michael-l-mikey-weinstein/> (accessed 10 March 2011).

⁴² Jimmy M. Browning, *Religious Expression or Religious Coercion: Commanders Caught in the Crossfire*, Strategy Research Project (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air War College, February 17, 2010), 5-6

⁴³ U.S. Army Home Page for Soldier Well Being, <https://www.armywell-being.org/skins/WBLO/home.aspx> (accessed 15 March 2011).

⁴⁴ Military Religious Freedom Foundation Home Page, <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/about/michael-l-mikey-weinstein/> (accessed 10 March 2011).

⁴⁵ Browning, *Religious Expression or Religious Coercion*, 5-6.

⁴⁶ U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Health Promotion*, Army Regulation 600-63 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, September 7, 2010), 25

